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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Science and
Education
Administration

Washington, D.C.
20250

April 30, 1979

In my April 11 letter, I promised you more information as we develop specific plans of action to deal with the realities of reduced personnel ceilings and selective program funding.

The two assessment groups--one analyzing support functions, the other reviewing SEA programs--continue to develop a range of options for SEA management to look at in mid-June. (The combined efforts of these two groups is being called the Comprehensive Assessment and Management Analysis Program--CAMAP). Meanwhile, there are other actions that are being taken to assure the least amount of disruption among SEA personnel.

On April 16, I established a Special Staffing Program to do two things: 1) Help us meet the lower personnel ceilings, and 2) permit recruitment for critical programs that have already been affected adversely by across-the-board attrition.

My memo, directed to all supervisors and managers, asked each one to take a hard look at all budgeted vacancies and to cancel or postpone the proposed entrance-on-duty date for many of them for the balance of FY 1979. An 8-page attachment provides a framework of guidelines to help with this task. Details of the Special Staffing Program are available to all SEA employees through their supervisors or managers.

I have also requested "early-out retirement" for SEA. With approval from the Department and the Office of Personnel Management, any SEA employee with 25 years of service, regardless of age, or those with 20 years of service and age 50 or over, could retire voluntarily. We hope to receive word on this request shortly.

In a second memo, I asked supervisors and managers to look at alternatives for accomplishing our work. For example, contracting out a large share of our support services must be seriously considered. I believe there is a great potential to be innovative in the scope of these arrangements.

A seminar on Contracting Out was held in Washington on Friday, April 27. This was attended by the SEA Management Team, the AR Regional Directors, Decision Unit Managers, and the support assessment group of CAMAP.

It will take time to develop the right mix of Federal performance, research agreements, and contracts to give us maximum effectiveness in carrying out our missions. It will also take time to arrive at the right balance of research, extension, and teaching considering the resources available in the future. The FY 1981 budget development system is exploring this mix and the balance. In fact, these are major charges of the Decision Unit Managers.

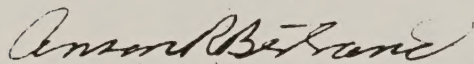
There are other actions and activities going on: A computerized data base of personnel information has been established to facilitate current and future personnel processing. It will aid management analysis of positions and personnel and links the four AR regions and headquarters. It is designed to insure full compliance with the Privacy Act and will be fully operational by the end of May.

The CAMAP support assessment group has distributed and is now reviewing results of a questionnaire on "Opportunities for Savings in SEA Support Functions." The questionnaire went to all managers, supervisors, and program and administrative staff specialists. About 250 completed questionnaires have already been returned. I'm pleased with this number and appreciate the time and effort that went into the responses. And at the same time, the Decision Unit Managers have been contacting field personnel for input, counsel, and advice relative to development of the FY 1981 budget.

The support assessment group has received staffing charts and plans from headquarters units to be included in the analysis of all parts of our organization.

I want to add that the people directly involved in CAMAP will not be making budget and personnel ceiling decisions. They will provide information, analyses, and options, but I will make the final decisions with the advice of the SEA Management Team.

Also, for the duration of the CAMAP activity, specific liaison links have been established for exchange of information between SEA and the land-grant universities. Charles McDougall, SEA-Extension, will act as liaison with the Cooperative Extension Services, and Mark Buchanan, Director-at-Large for the Western Agricultural Experiment Station Directors, has agreed to provide liaison with State agricultural experiment station directors. Ideas and suggestions from our cooperators are welcome; channel them through these two people or send them directly to Ralph J. McCracken, who is leading the overall CAMAP effort.



ANSON R. BERTRAND
Director
Science and Education

